RED DOG ARMY

JVSTIN GRAY RAFA GARRES

2014

BIBLIOTHECA VIRTVALIS

JUSTIN GRAY

Over the last decade, Justin Gray has worked on comicbook titles that include *Power Girl, 21Down, Jonah Hex, Marvel Adventures, The Monolith*, *Daughters of the Dragon*, and *Tattered Man*.

He's also written for children's magazines, film, television, and video games.

Prior to his work as a professional author, Justin was a fossil hunter, advocate for victims of crime, and a microphotographer capturing rare images of 20-million-year-old insects trapped in amber.

RAFA GARRES

Rafa Garres studied at the Massana Art School and at the Faculty of Arts in Barcelona. He began his career in 1996, drawing covers for the Spanish editions of *Conan* as well as the series *Hombres y Bestias* for **Glénat**.

Since then, Garres has worked for publishers like **DC Comics, Fleetway** and **Crusade** and more, working on characters like *Jonah Hex, Lobo, Slaine, Judge Dredd, Jaguar God, Spectre* and more.

Rafa Garres is also an illustrator and painter and has worked with Jimmy and Justin many times over the years. His style has been compared to Frank Frazetta meets Berni Wrightson. We agree.

Ce n'est sans doute pas la meilleure BD de guerre mais il n'est toutefois pas si fréquent de voir dans les comics américains un héros soviétique. Celui-ci, Youri Schlonsky, est l'un des plus fameux dresseurs de chiens du pays. Nous sommes en 1941 et la rodina a besoin de tous ses fils, fussent-ils comme Youri d'un âge déjà avancé. Le voici obligé de quitter son épouse Alina pour aller dresser des chiens qui seront sacrifiés en les précipitant, chargés d'explosifs contre les tanks nazis.

La confrontation entre Youri, vieil humaniste, et son nouveau commandant, Rabin Ousachev, va vite devenir conflictuelle. Il y avait là matière à faire une sorte de Croix de Fer (1977) soviétique. Mais Justin Gray n'est pas Sam Peckinpah, peut-être aussi que les 30 planches qui lui étaient allouées étaient trop justes pour développer autrement qu'à marche forcée la tension entre les deux hommes.

Au fil des pages sont évoquées en filigranes la dure condition des soldats, l'antisémitisme latent du stalinisme, l'absurdité des attaques dites de saturation, et de manière plus générale le sacrifice consenti par le pays pour repousser l'hydre nazi.

Il faut donc considérer cette histoire comme un essai qui méritait un plus grand développement car les dessins de Rafa Garres ne manquent ni de puissance, ni de beauté.

Garches, le 24 avril 2024

RED DOG DAMY

WRITTEN BY: JUSTIN GRAY ART BY: RAFA GARRES COLORS BY: CHALLENGING STUDIOS LETTERS BY: BILL TORTOLINI

WHAT DO THEY WANT?
I DO NOT KNOW.

COMRADE, YURI SCHLONSKY?
MAY I HELP YOU, COMRADE?

MY NAME IS OGRYZKO. I AM A SPECIAL OFFICER OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

HAVE YOU COME ALL THE WAY FROM MOSCOW?
I AM HERE BECAUSE THE SOVIET ARMY HAS NEED OF YOUR SKILLS TO AID IN THE WAR EFFORT.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
MY HUSBAND IS NOT A SOLDIER.

ALINA, TAKE MALYSH INSIDE AND LET US TALK.
YURI...
PLEASE, MY LOVE.
LET ME SPEAK WITH COMRADE OGRYZKO.

WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?
WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO TRAIN DOGS.

FORGIVE ME, BUT I COULD RECOMMEND HALF A DOZEN MEN BETTER SUITED TO TRAINING GUARD DOGS.

THIS IS A TOP-SECRET INITIATIVE ORDERED BY STALIN HIMSELF.

STALIN...?
I WILL GIVE YOU AN HOUR TO MAKE PREPARATIONS AND TO SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR WIFE.

FIELD KENNEL KRASNAYA ZVEZDA

I DO NOT LIKE IT HERE, SCHLONSKY.
I SHOULD BE IN THE FIELD COMMANDING MEN TO KILL NAZIS, NOT FREEZING MY ASS OFF BABYSITTING DOGS AND OLD MEN.

WE *ALL* HAVE OUR PART TO PLAY, I SUPPOSE.

I AM ONLY WAITING FOR THE KREMLIN TO *REALIZE* THIS INITIATIVE IS A *FUCKING WASTE OF TIME.*

WHAT INITIATIVE IS THAT?
YOU HAVE ARRIVED IN TIME TO SEE OUR AFTERNOON DRILLS. I'LL SHOW YOU A RARE LIVE EXERCISE.

ARE YOU AWARE THAT OVER THREE THOUSAND PANZER TANKS WERE UNLEASHED UPON US IN JUNE.
I DID NOT KNOW THERE WERE THAT MANY. I HAVE NO RADIO WHERE I LIVE AND NEWS IS SLOW TO REACH ME.

IF WERE IT NOT FOR THE WINTER, MOSCOW WOULD HAVE FALLEN TO NAZI OCCUPATION BY NOW. A JEW LIKE YOURSELF WOULD BE DEAD, OR IN A FAR WORSE PLACE.
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT RUSSIAN WINTER COULD BE A *GOOD THING?*

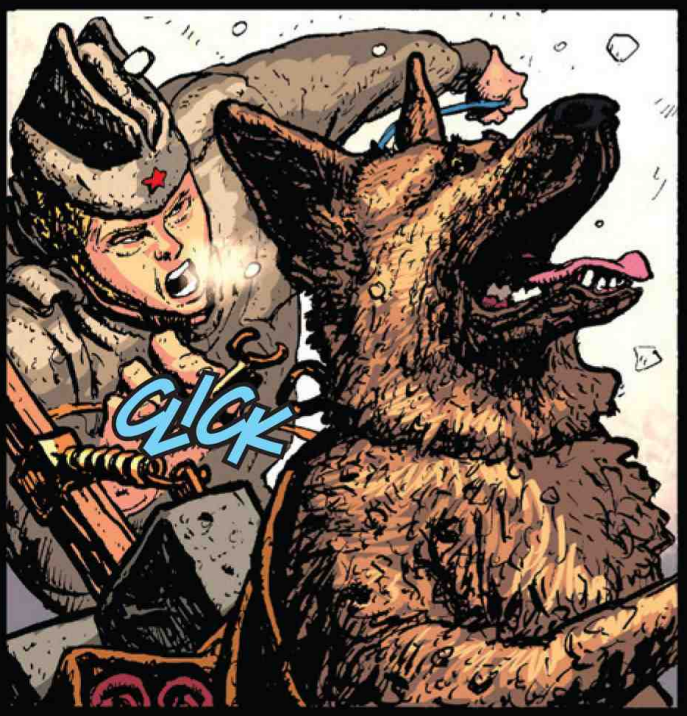
THIS IS NO PLACE FOR *JOKES*. THE NAZIS HAVE EMBARRASSED US IN FRONT OF THE WORLD.
COMRADE, THAT DOG IS SEVERELY MALNOURISHED.

YOU CANNOT INSPIRE DOGS WITH WORDS OR ACTIONS LIKE YOU CAN A MAN. YOU CANNOT INSTILL IN THEM THE SENSE OF PRIDE A SOLDIER CARRIES INTO BATTLE.
FOOD IS THE ONLY TRUE MEANS OF CONTROL.

I THINK YOU WOULD BE *SURPRISED* AT HOW SMART...
I DON'T *WANT* SURPRISES, SCHLONSKY.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HITLER SAID OF OUR COUNTRY AFTER UKRAINE FELL?
WE HAVE ONLY TO KICK IN THE FRONT DOOR AND THE WHOLE ROTTEN RUSSIAN EDIFICE WILL COME TUMBLING DOWN.

AND THIS...
THIS IS STALIN'S RESPONSE.


CLICK

THE MECHANISM IS SIMPLE.
A LEVER IS RAISED. A SIMPLE ON AND OFF SWITCH.
THE DOG CRAWLS UNDER THE TANK, TRIGGERING THE SWITCH BUT...
FUCKING DOG CAN'T EVEN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A NAZI TANK AND ONE OF OUR OWN!
CLICK
KRAKOOM!

THIS IS WHY YOU ARE HERE, OLD MAN.
TO TURN DOGS INTO BOMBS?

TO TURN *USELESS* DOGS INTO EFFECTIVE *ANTI-TANK WEAPONS.*

RED DAMN BUS

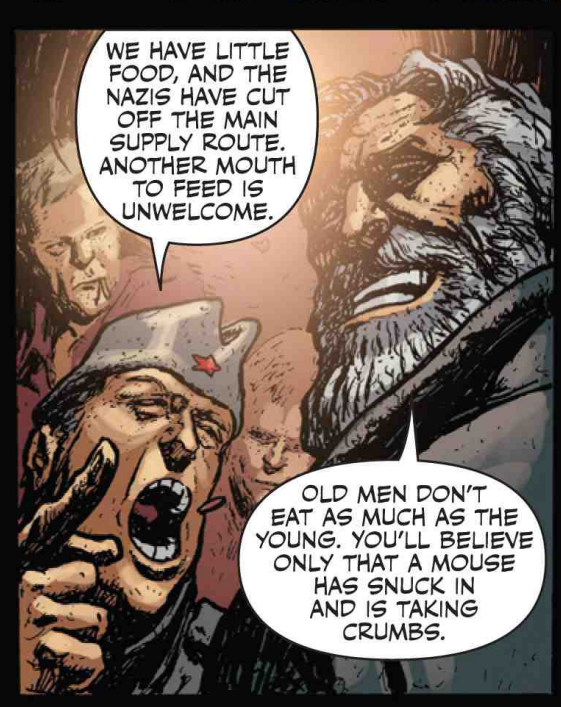
AGAIN? HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

HAH! HAH! HAH!
YOU CANNOT BE THAT FUCKING LUCKY!

PRIVET, BRAVE SOLDIERS OF THE RED DOG ARMY.

HAVE I DONE SOMETHING TO OFFEND?
THIS IS THE GUY?
THE TRAINER?
THERE ARE NO MORE BEDS.

THEN I SHALL HAPPILY TAKE THE FLOOR.
YOU'RE THE LAST THING WE NEEDED, OLD MAN.
COMRADE USACHEV SHARES YOUR SENTI-MENTS.
FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.
I'M SORRY. I DON'T UNDER-STAND.


WE HAVE LITTLE FOOD, AND THE NAZIS HAVE CUT OFF THE MAIN SUPPLY ROUTE. ANOTHER MOUTH TO FEED IS UNWELCOME.
OLD MEN DON'T EAT AS MUCH AS THE YOUNG. YOU'LL BELIEVE ONLY THAT A MOUSE HAS SNUCK IN AND IS TAKING CRUMBS.

OF COURSE SACHA IS CONCERNED. HE EATS LIKE A FARM HOG.
STAY OUT OF THIS, VALERIYA.

YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO YOU'RE SPEAKING TO?
THIS MAN IS AN ORIGINAL BOLSHEVIK. WHILE MOST OF YOU WERE STILL DRINKING BREAST MILK, HE WAS ON THE FRONT LINES WITH TROTSKY IN POLAND.
IS THIS TRUE?
IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. I WAS A YOUNGER MAN FULL OF RECKLESS IDEALS AND POETRY.
THIS IS YURI SCHLONSKY, THE BEST DOG TRAINER IN RUSSIA! ALSO A HERO.
HOW IS IT YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT ME?
WE ARE BOTH FROM TSARITSYN. MY NAME IS VALERIYA PETROFF. YOU ARE FAMOUS, MR. SCHLONSKY.
I HOPE YOU HAVE A WAY TO MAKE DOGS SMARTER, BECAUSE IF NOT, USACHEV IS GOING TO HAVE OUR BALLS BY SPRING.
THIS ENTIRE INITIATIVE IS MADNESS.
YOU'LL FIND US IN AGREEMENT ON THAT.
YOU ALL WORK WITH DOGS?
SOME, NOT ALL.
THERE ARE ONLY MYSELF, GOGOL, DMITRI OVER THERE, AND FADDEI ON THE FAR END.
THE OTHERS ARE PART OF THE MECHANIZED CORPS. THEY DO TANK EXERCISES AND REPAIRS.
AND YOU?
SNIPER.

SHE'S ADOPTED.
A STORK DROPPED HER IN OUR CAMP.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

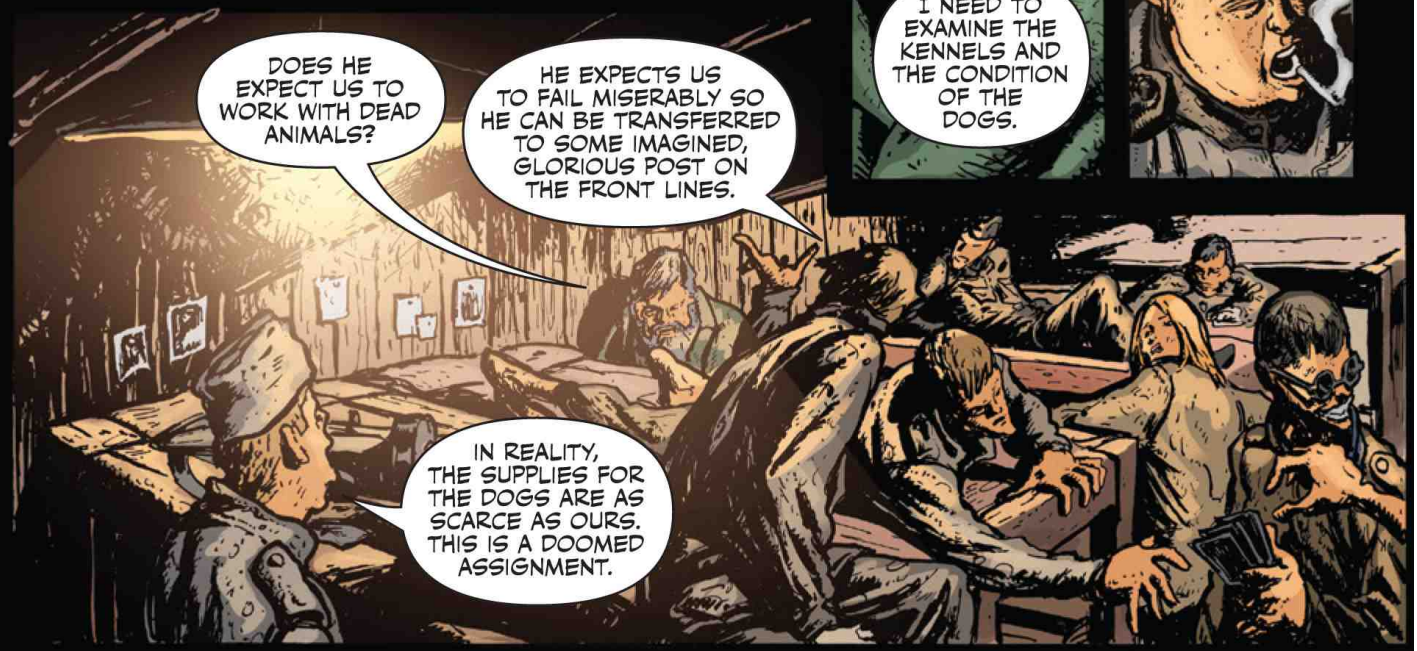
A TALE FOR ANOTHER TIME.
SACHA SAID THERE WERE NO MORE BUNKS. IS THERE A SPOT ON THE FLOOR?

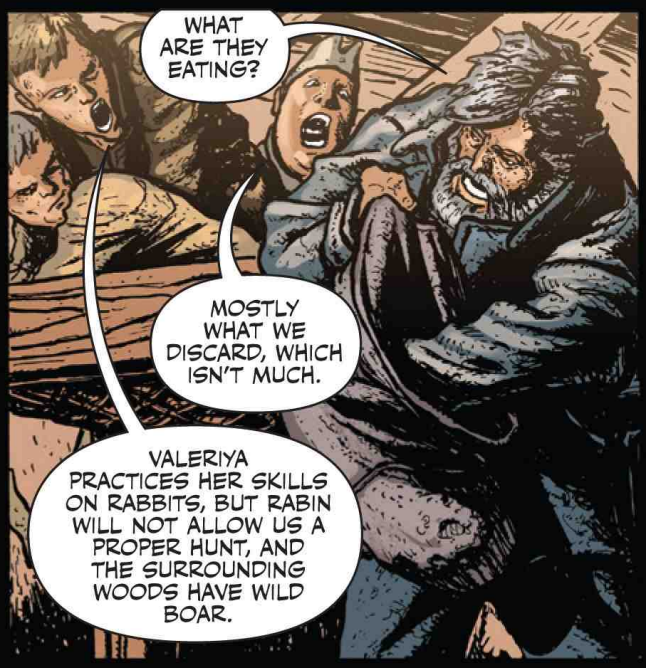
SACHA IS AN ASSHOLE. THERE IS ONE BUNK BY ME.
THAT BUNK BELONGED TO ALEXI.

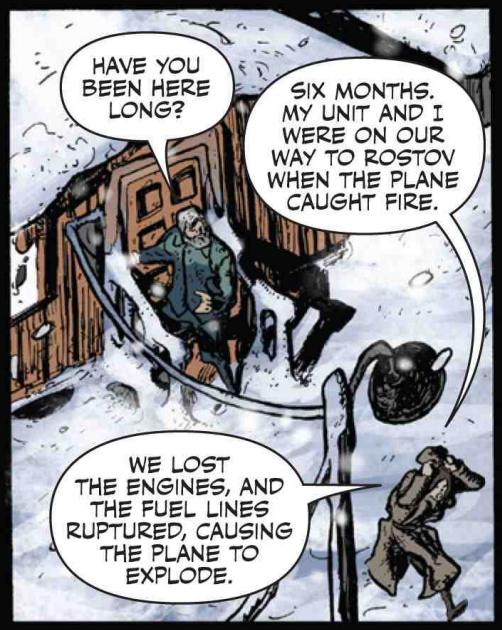
YES IT DID, FADDEI, BUT HE IS DEAD AND NO LONGER NEEDS IT.

I NEED TO EXAMINE THE KENNELS AND THE CONDITION OF THE DOGS.

DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME. MOST OF THEM WILL NOT LAST THE WINTER.


DOES HE EXPECT US TO WORK WITH DEAD ANIMALS?
HE EXPECTS US TO FAIL MISERABLY SO HE CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO SOME IMAGINED, GLORIOUS POST ON THE FRONT LINES.
IN REALITY, THE SUPPLIES FOR THE DOGS ARE AS SCARCE AS OURS. THIS IS A DOOMED ASSIGNMENT.





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THE GЯЭДT HЦИT

THIS SHOULD GIVE US ENOUGH COVER AND A LINE OF SIGHT SHOULD ANYTHING COME SNIFFING AROUND.
IF HE CATCHES US, HE'LL HAVE US SHOT.
I AM A CIVILIAN. HE CAN'T SHOOT ME.
YURI, PLEASE LISTEN.
DON'T WORRY SO MUCH, VALERIYA. I KNOW HIS TYPE.
WHEN HE SEES THE FOOD, HIS STOMACH WILL TELL HIS MIND WHAT TO THINK.
I WISH TO ASK...

HOW WAS IT TO BE PART OF THE REVOLUTION? THE PRIDE YOU MUST HAVE FELT WHEN THE BOLSHEVIKS SEIZED THE WINTER PALACE...
NOT AS ROMANTIC AS IT HAS BEEN PORTRAYED, VALERIYA, AND I AM TOO COLD TO DISCUSS POLITICS.

BUT PEACE, LAND, AND BREAD FOR ALL! TO HELP USHER IN CHANGE FOR DESPERATE PEOPLE.
THERE IS TOO MUCH PROPAGANDA IN SCHOOLS TODAY.
THE BOLSHEVIKS WERE A MINORITY WITHIN THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT. THEY ROSE IN POWER BECAUSE THE TSAR ABDICATED HIS THRONE, NOTHING MORE.
IS NOT SOCIALISM BETTER THAN LIVING WITH A TYRANT?

IT MAY BE, BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE--WE ARE NOT SOCIALIST. NOT AS IT IS MEANT TO BE. OUR COMMANDER USACHEV IS THE NEW FACE OF RUSSIA.

WHAT A TERRIBLE THOUGHT.

BLAM!

THERE ARE MORE!
I SEE THEM!

WHUKK

BLAM!
BLAM!

GGRRAAAH!

I'M COMING!
VALERIYA, PLEASE GET THIS DAMNED BEAST OFF OF ME.
THERE... HUFF...IS GOOD...PLENTY FOR THE MEN AND DOGS...

I THOUGHT IT WOULD KILL YOU.
IT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU HAVE A PRETTY WIFE. YOU LEARN TO FIGHT OFF THE PIGS.

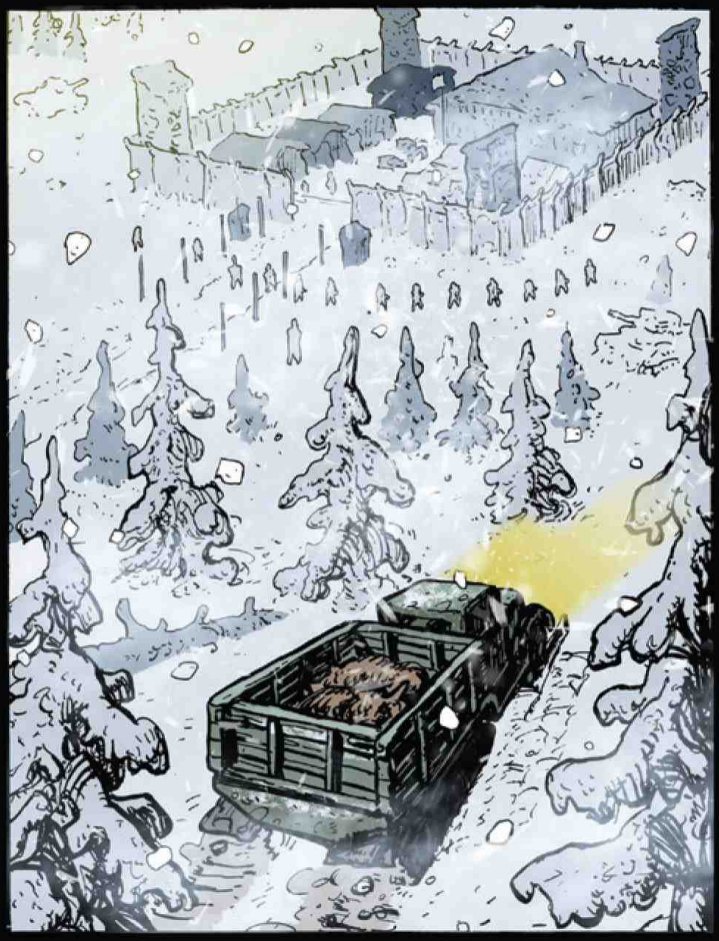
MAYBE WE TELL RABIN THESE PIGS ARE NAZI SPIES.
HEH!

YURI, WHY DID YOU SAY RABIN WAS THE NEW FACE OF RUSSIA?
WE ARE STILL A BACKWARD NATION, POOR AND STUMBLING AROUND IN MUD WITH A SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT, WHICH IS WHY THE NAZIS ROLLED SO FREELY OVER US.

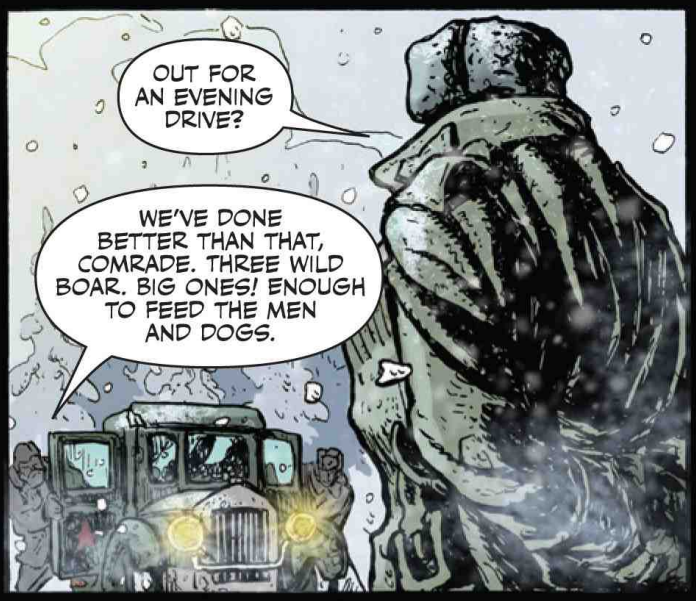
BUT WE HAVE RALLIED, AND WHEN WINTER BREAKS, WE WILL TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE NAZIS.
IF WE DRIVE OUT THE NAZIS AND PROVE THE HEARTS, MINDS, AND WILL OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE IS STRONG...
AND IF WE WIN, THEN WHAT?

THE BOLSHEVIKS INHERITED AN UNDERDEVELOPED SOCIETY THAT NEEDS TO BE INDUSTRIALIZED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
COMMUNISM IS FAILING AS IT FAILED IN THE WEST.

THE TSARS HAVE LEFT US WITH THEIR PROBLEMS, HOW WE FIX THEM IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE REVOLUTION OR COMMUNISM.
PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT. IT WILL BE LIGHT SOON. WE'D BETTER HURRY BACK.



HE DOES NOT LOOK PLEASED.


OUT FOR AN EVENING DRIVE?
WE'VE DONE BETTER THAN THAT, COMRADE. THREE WILD BOAR. BIG ONES! ENOUGH TO FEED THE MEN AND DOGS.

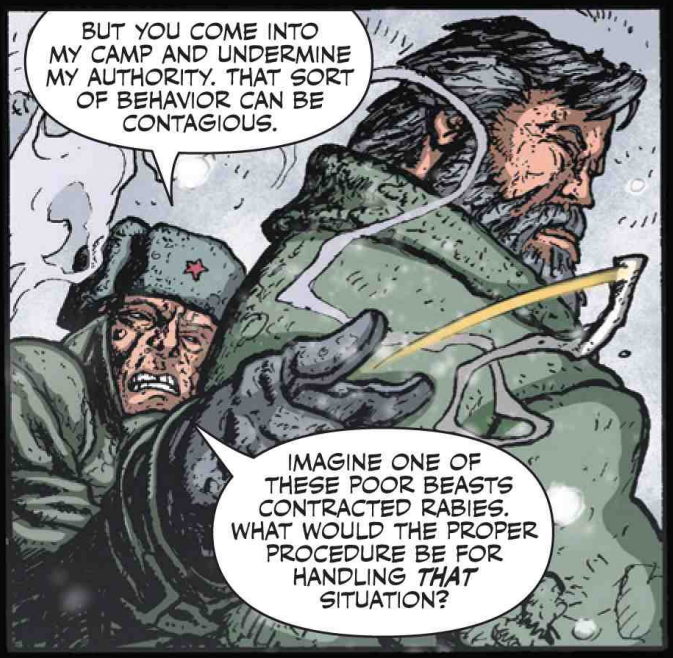
FEED THE DOGS?
WE *ALL* NEED TO EAT. IF THE DOGS ARE TO PERFORM THEIR TASKS...

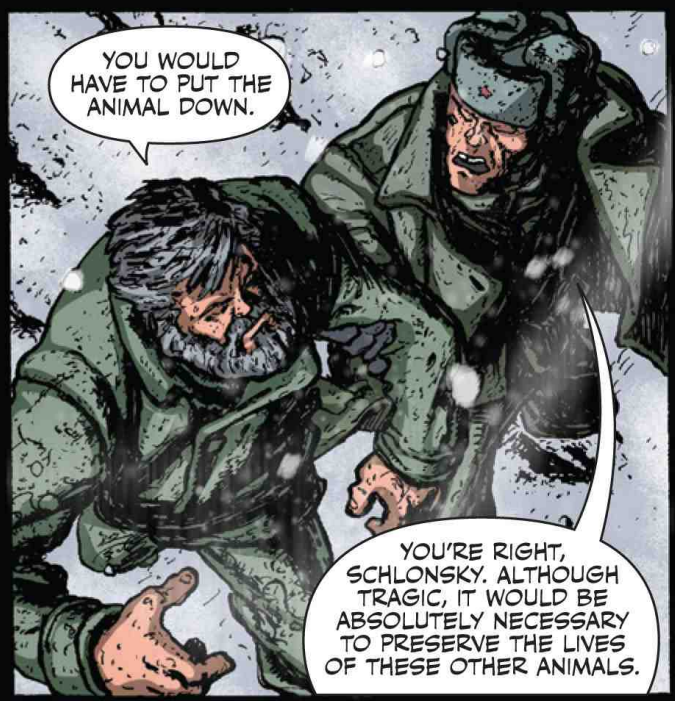
YOUR FIRST NIGHT UNDER MY COMMAND, YOU SNEAK OFF AND KILL NOT ONE, BUT *THREE* WILD BOAR. YOU'RE THE CAMP HERO, MR. SCHLONSKY!
OF COURSE, TO DO THIS, YOU STOLE ONE OF MY TRUCKS, WASTED MY AMMUNITION, AND DISRESPECTED MY AUTHORITY.
COMMANDER, THIS WAS NOT MY AIM IN HUNTING...

COME WITH ME, CAMP HERO.
THE REST OF YOU MEN MAY BUTCHER THESE BEASTS!

HERE WE ARE. PRIVATE QUARTERS FOR YURI, THE GREAT HUNTER.
YOU LOVE THE DOGS SO MUCH, THEN YOU SLEEP WHERE THEY SLEEP AND YOU EAT WHAT THEY EAT!
I AM NOT A SOLDIER IN YOUR COMMAND. I AM A CIVILIAN AIDING THE CAUSE.

YOU'RE PARTIALLY RIGHT, COMRADE SCHLONSKY.
YOU ARE NOT A SOLDIER. I THINK YOU ARE MORE LIKE ONE OF THESE WRETCHED ANIMALS I HAVE BEEN BURDENED WITH.


BUT YOU COME INTO MY CAMP AND UNDERMINE MY AUTHORITY. THAT SORT OF BEHAVIOR CAN BE CONTAGIOUS.
IMAGINE ONE OF THESE POOR BEASTS CONTRACTED RABIES. WHAT WOULD THE PROPER PROCEDURE BE FOR HANDLING *THAT* SITUATION?


YOU WOULD HAVE TO PUT THE ANIMAL DOWN.
YOU'RE RIGHT, SCHLONSKY. ALTHOUGH TRAGIC, IT WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO PRESERVE THE LIVES OF THESE OTHER ANIMALS.

AS YOU ENJOY YOUR NEW ACCOMMODATION, BE MINDFU THAT WE DO HAVE RATS.
TRY NOT TO GET BITTEN, SCHLONSKY.

THE RUSSIAN FRONT, 1942

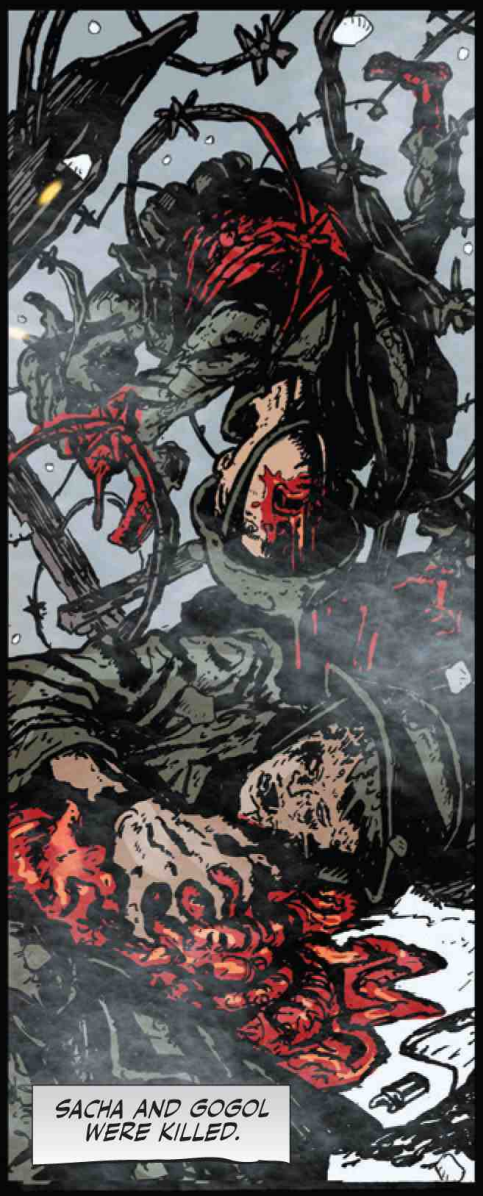
TROOPS FROM SIBERIA MARCHED WEST WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE T-34! GERMAN GENERALS VON KLIEST AND GUDERIAN CALLED THEM THE DEADLIEST TANKS IN THE WORLD.

OUR TROOPS NEAR MOSCOW WERE BETTER PREPARED THAN THE NAZIS, AND NONE BETTER THAN OUR SKI BATTALIONS. IF NOT FOR THE RED DOG ARMY, MOSCOW MIGHT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN LOCATED ON THE MOON.

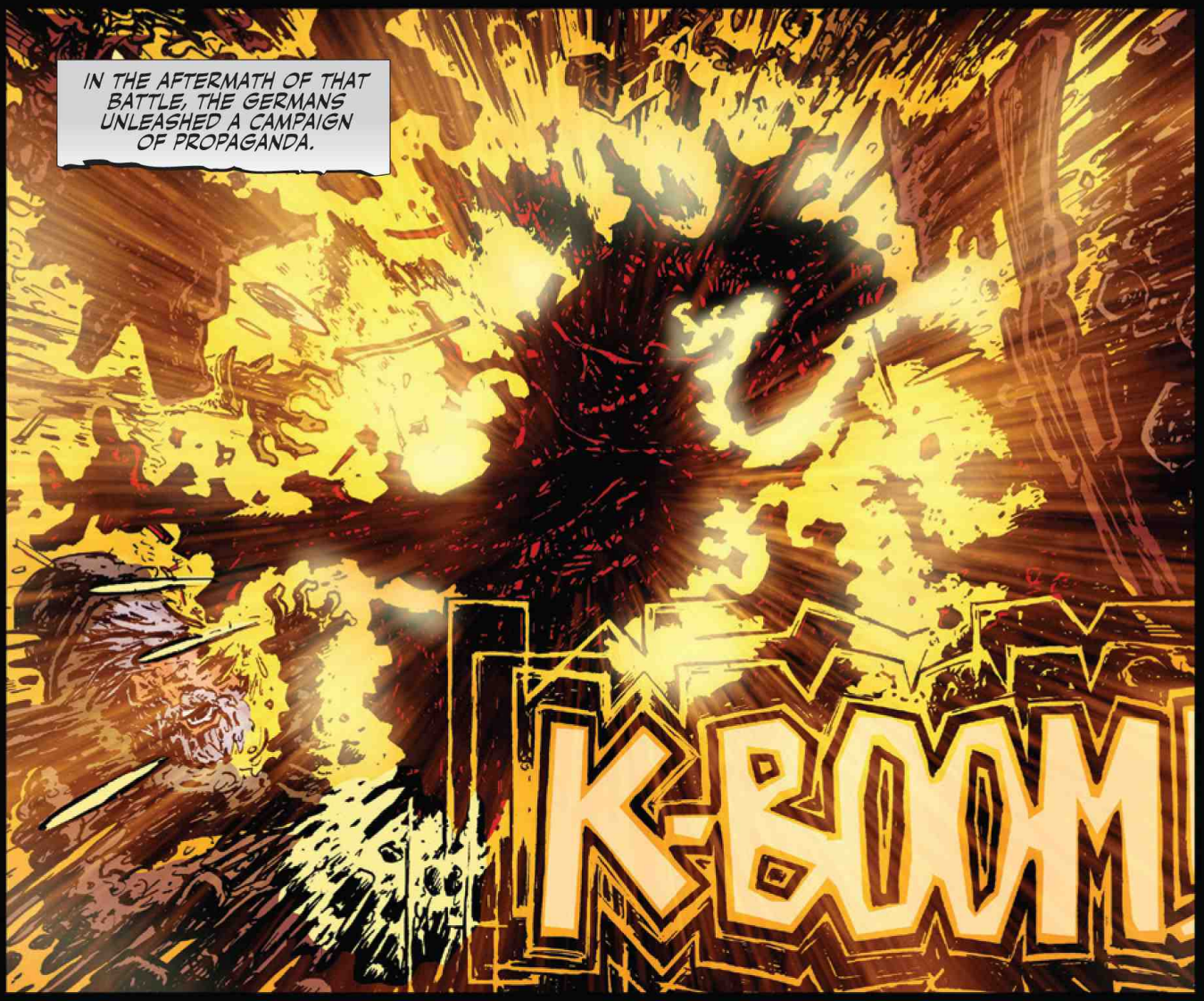
WHEN THEY WERE FINALLY DEPLOYED INTO THE FIELD, IT WAS...

...A DISASTER.

K-BOOM!


SACHA AND GOGOL WERE KILLED.

SEVERAL DOGS EXPLODED UPON RETURNING TO THE TRENCHES, KILLING AND INJURING OUR OWN SOLDIERS.


IN THE AFTERMATH OF THAT BATTLE, THE GERMANS UNLEASHED A CAMPAIGN OF PROPAGANDA.
K-BOOM!

THEY SAID WE PROUD RUSSIANS SENT DOGS TO FIGHT FOR US OUT OF FEAR AND DESPERATION.

ONCE AGAIN, RABIN USACHEV SUFFERED A GREAT HUMILIATION.
THE CRUELTY THAT NORMALLY SURFACED WHEN HE DRANK WAS NOW ON THE LOOSE FOR GOOD. WAR HAS A WAY OF TWISTING A MAN'S MIND.

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WE ARE TRYING TO SAVE OUR NATION! WOULD YOU SEE RUSSIA CRUSHED BENEATH HITLER'S BOOT HEEL?
THIS ISN'T ABOUT THE NAZIS. YOU ARE UNFIT TO LEAD.

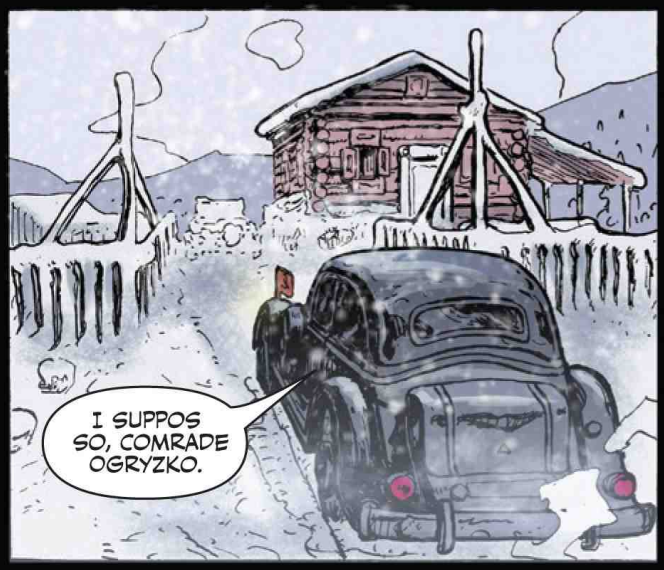
AND YOU ARE UNFIT TO LIVE. LIKE AN OLD DOG TOO WEAK TO MOVE, YOU MUST BE PUT DOWN.
THERE IS A HAPPY SIDE TO THIS. YOU WILL SEE YOUR WIFE AGAIN.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

DIDN'T I TELL YOU? SHE DIED MONTHS AGO. I RECEIVED A LETTER. I THOUGHT I GAVE IT TO YOU.
IT MUST HAVE SLIPPED MY MIND.
YOU BASTARD.

MAYBE YOU'LL SEE YOUR PRECIOUS DOGS SOON TOO. PLAY WITH THEM IN THE FIELD.
MAYBE YOU'LL SEE THEM AS CHUNKS OF MEAT AND FUR AS THEY WERE ON THE BATTLEF--
SKRAKK

BRRRRR
YURI? YOU ARE SAFE MY FRIEND.
THE TROOP WILL TESTIFY THAT ENEMY SNIPER FIRE KILLED RABIN.
YOU SHOULD HAVE LET HIM KILL ME.
IT'S OVER, YURI. YOU CAN GO HOME.
HOME? MY WIFE IS DEAD. THERE IS NO HOME WITHOUT HER.
I AM SORRY, MY FRIEND.
IF I SURVIVE THIS WAR, I WILL COME HOME AND HELP YOU.
WINTER KEPT THE NAZIS FROM CAPTURING MOSCOW.

THE ДFТЭЯМДТН



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MY GOD... YOU'RE... ALIVE...!

YOU'RE ALIVE!!
SO ARE YOU, MY LOVE!
I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM COMMANDER USCHEV SAYING YOU'D BEEN KILLED!
HE TOLD ME THE SAME!

MY SWEET GIRL. I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU. I WAS READY TO DIE...
NEVER LEAVE ME AGAIN, YURI. I COULDN'T BEAR IT IF YOU DID.
WE DIE TOGETHER. PROMISE ME.

I PROMISE.

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